

# Your Holiday Vacation Checklist for Air Travel

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Good cheer? Check. Presents for everyone? Check. Holiday travel angst? Check. As hectic as it is to fly during the holidays, you can minimize travel stress if you're well prepared. This vacation checklist for holiday travel will help you remember what to pack and what to leave home.

## Holiday Vacation Checklist: What To Pack

- **The right-sized bag.** During the holiday travel season, space is at a premium and airlines scrutinize carry-on bags to make sure they fit the requirements. Measure and weigh your luggage before you leave home. Read the carry-on rules for different airlines [here](#).
- **Gift bags and tissue paper:** The Transportation Security Administration allows wrapped gifts in luggage, but if an item is suspicious, they'll open the paper and inspect the gifts inside.<sup>1</sup> Don't expect them to redo your careful wrapping job. The best plan is to pack your gifts and wrappings separately.
- **Extra gifts:** If you're traveling back home or to a large family event, it's a good bet you'll run into a relative or friend you weren't expecting to see. Cover your bases by packing some small, all-purpose gifts suitable for children or adults. Ideas include chocolate bars, tea samplers and, of course, gift cards.
- **Pies and cakes:** Carrying a home-baked pie through security isn't the easiest feat, but it can be done. The TSA permits pies and cakes as carry-ons, but they are subject to additional screening.<sup>1</sup>
- **Extra entertainment:** Travel delays seem inevitable during the holidays. Winter weather, crowded airports and anxious passengers conspire to make travel more complicated. Prepare for delays by packing an extra crossword puzzle book or adding more magazines to your e-reader.
- **Lots of layers:** You're chilly in the airport, sweating on the plane and freezing once you step outside. Pack several thin layers, from thermal underwear to a fleece vest to a waterproof jacket.
- **Wool socks:** We're not talking about the thick and itchy variety, but thin, warm, moisture-wicking socks made of SmartWool or something similar.

- **Chapstick and sunblock:** Protect your sensitive lips and skin from winter weather.
- **Travel insurance:** This is a must-have on your holiday vacation checklist. Travel insurance from Allianz Global Assistance includes severe weather as a covered reason for trip cancellations, trip interruptions or trip delays. Just don't wait too long to buy it — if you purchase insurance when a named winter storm is on the horizon, your plan won't provide coverage for claims related to that known event.

### **Holiday Vacation Checklist: What Not to Pack**

Don't expect the TSA to get into the holiday spirit. The usual travel restrictions apply to everything you bring on board, including gifts.

- ✗ **Canned or jarred food gifts in your carry-on:** Unless they're less than 3.4 ounces (which would make a measly gift), you need to place cans or jars of food in your checked luggage. The TSA provides a list of items you shouldn't bring on board:
  - Cranberry sauce
  - Creamy dips and spreads (cheeses, peanut butter, etc.)
  - Gift baskets with food items (salsa, jams and salad dressings)
  - Gravy
  - Jams
  - Jellies
  - Maple syrup
  - Oils and vinegars
  - Salad dressing
  - Salsa
  - Sauces
  - Soups
  - Wine, liquor and beer
- ✗ **Perfume or lotion gifts in your carry-on:** Again, these are forbidden unless they're smaller than 3.4 ounces.
- ✗ **Snow globes in your carry-on:** The TSA has a specific policy for bringing snow globes on board (believe it or not). Snow globes are subject to the same restrictions on liquids and gels. They're only allowed if they appear to contain less than 3.4 ounces (approximately tennis ball size) and if the entire snow globe, including the base, is able to fit in the same single quart-sized bag as your other liquid containers. We say skip the hassle and leave the snow globes.
- ✗ **Pets in checked luggage:** The Humane Society urges pet owners not to travel with their pets during the holidays, because they're more likely to be handled roughly. Alaska Air even bans pets in the cargo hold on certain flights during the peak holiday season.